

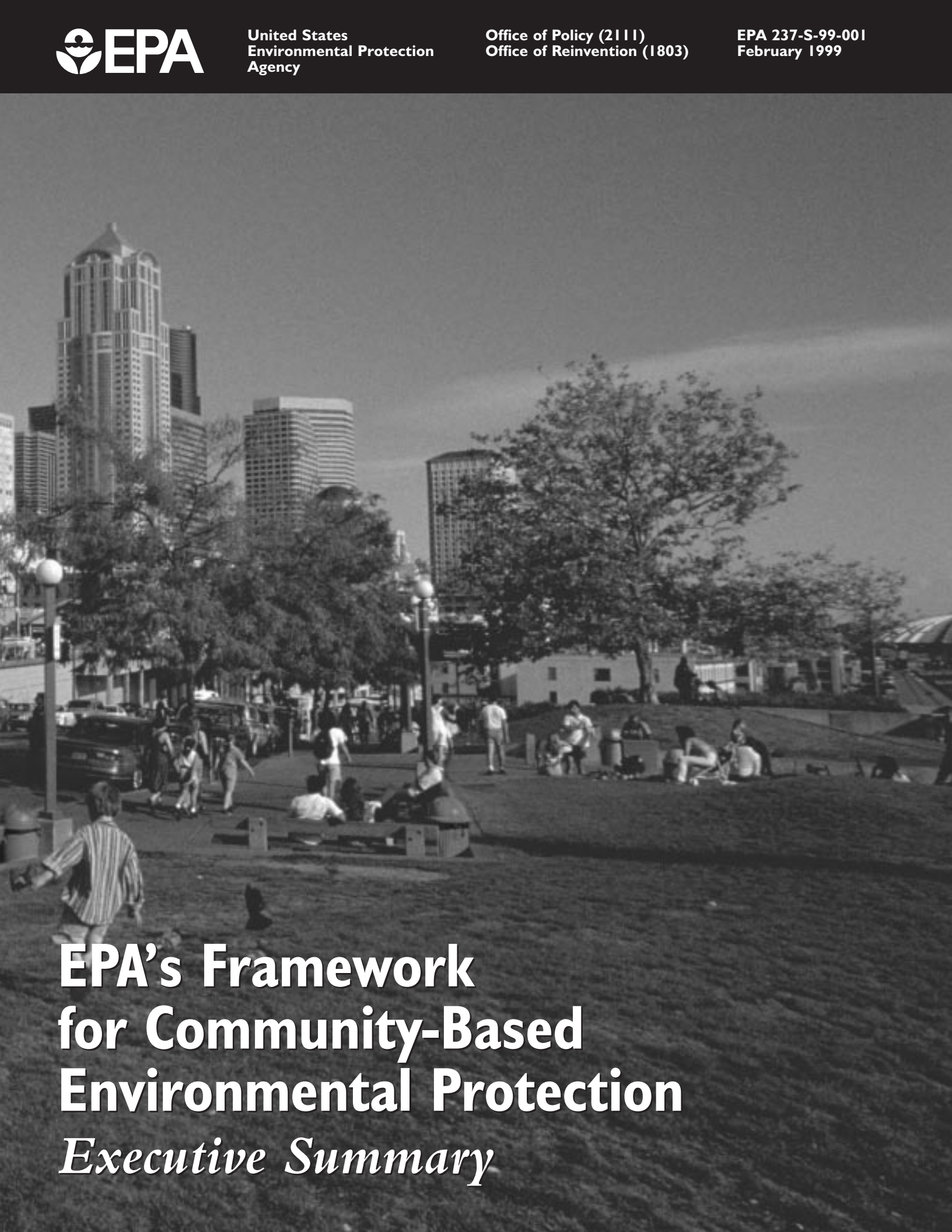




United States
Environmental Protection
Agency

Office of Policy (2111)
Office of Reinvention (1803)

EPA 237-S-99-001
February 1999

A black and white photograph of a city park. In the foreground, a grassy area with several people, including children, is visible. In the background, a dense urban skyline with various skyscrapers is seen under a clear sky. The overall scene suggests a healthy, accessible urban environment.

EPA's Framework for Community-Based Environmental Protection

Executive Summary

Acknowledgments

The principal authors and coordinators of EPA's Framework for Community-Based Environmental Protection (CBEP) included Michael Mason (Team Leader) and Amanda Tipton Bassow from the Office of Sustainable Ecosystems and Communities (OSEC). Over the course of the project, OSEC's CBEP Framework Team was managed by Wendy Cleland-Hamnett (Director, OSEC), Leonard Fleckenstein (Acting Director, OSEC), and Gerald Filbin (Acting Director, OSEC's Policy and Coordination Division).

The following additional OSEC members also contributed to this report: Betsy Laroe, Lynn Desautels, Glenn Eugster, Laura Gabanski, Otto Guttenson, Michael Kronthal, William Painter, Heidi Paulsen, Marilyn Smith-Church, and Theresa Trainor.

OSEC relied on the support of the Agency's CBEP Coordinators in providing a number of opportunities—through discussion sessions and written comment periods—for feedback on the CBEP Framework from EPA managers and staff. OSEC would like to acknowledge the assistance of the following past and present CBEP Coordinators: Deborah Harstedt (Region 1); Rabi Kieber (Region 2); Dominique Lueckenhoff; Susan McDowell (Region 3); Grace Dietrick (Region 4); Don Kathan, Marilou Martin (Region 5); Debora Browning, Cynthia Wolfe (Region 6); Kathleen Fenton (Region 7); Karen Hamilton, Nat Miullo, Stacey Erickson, Peter Ismert, Ayn Schmit (Region 8); Debbie Schechter, Stephanie Valentine, Denise Zvonoveck (Region 9); Richard Parkin (Region 10); Paul Rasmussen (OAR); Walter Brodtman (OECA); Tom Tillman (OPPTS); David Klauder, Claudia Walters (ORD); Karen Burgan, Will Bowman, David Nicholas (OSWER); Ben Ficks, Anne Treash (OW); Tom Marshall (OGC); Judith Koontz, Jacques Kapuscinski (OARM); Alex Wolfe, Michael Brody (OPAA); Karen Flagstad (OR); and Danny Gogal (OEJ).

OSEC would also like to acknowledge the valuable comments received from numerous individuals representing EPA's partners in community-based environmental protection. These include representatives from federal, local, tribal, and state governments; national associations; and community organizations. In addition, the Agency's National Environmental Justice Advisory Council, Local Government Advisory Committee, and Tribal Operations Council provided comments on the CBEP Framework at their regular national meetings.

Special thanks to Joel Ann Todd of The Scientific Consulting Group, Inc., for providing meeting, analytical, and editing support, and Joan O'Callaghan of The Communications Collective for editorial assistance and layout design and production of the final document.

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What Is the Purpose of This Framework?

Many of today's environmental problems cannot be solved through traditional command-and-control approaches that address only air or water or solid waste in isolation. All resources in a particular place are interconnected and need to be addressed holistically. Furthermore, not all parts of the country have the same problems or need the same solutions.

Community-based environmental protection (CBEP) can help EPA achieve its mission by integrating activities in ways that complement and increase the effectiveness of EPA's regulatory programs. This Framework identifies specific goals, strategies, activities, and performance measures EPA will need for implementing the CBEP approach to environmental management.

What Is and What Isn't Community-Based Environmental Protection?

CBEP brings together public and private stakeholders in a specific place or community to identify environmental and public health concerns, set priorities, and forge comprehensive solutions toward sustainable communities.

Through this holistic, collaborative process, stakeholders consider environmental protection along with human social needs. CBEP helps communities work toward achieving long-term ecosystem health and fosters linkages between economic prosperity and environmental well-being.

To avoid misunderstandings within EPA and among its partners, it is important to clarify for EPA's programs and activities what CBEP is *not*. It is:

- ▶ Not regulatory relief or a replacement of regulatory authority and program activities.
- ▶ Not a separate new program, a special limited initiative, or a pilot project.
- ▶ Not focused on one environmental medium, problem, or component of a community.
- ▶ Not solely doing a better job of community outreach or public relations in traditional single-medium programs.
- ▶ Not an abandonment of the best available science (e.g., human health and ecological risk assessments) for environmental decision making.
- ▶ Not intended to disrupt existing state–local or federal–tribal government relationships.
- ▶ Not a panacea.

CORE PRINCIPLES OF COMMUNITY-BASED ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

EPA has identified the following core principles to guide the implementation of the CBEP approach in different places:

- ▶ Focus on a definable geographic area.
- ▶ Work collaboratively with a full range of stakeholders through effective partnerships.
- ▶ Assess the quality of the air, water, land, and living resources in a place as a whole.
- ▶ Integrate environmental, economic, and social objectives and foster local stewardship of all community resources.
- ▶ Use the appropriate public and private, regulatory and nonregulatory tools.
- ▶ Monitor and redirect efforts through adaptive management.

What Are EPA's Community-Based Environmental Protection Goals?

Because CBEP is an approach—or a way of doing business—and not a separate program, the specific goals of EPA's authorizing statutes and base programs (i.e., Air, Pesticides and Toxics, Solid and Hazardous Waste, and Water) are also EPA's CBEP goals. CBEP actively supports the Agency's mission, program-specific goals, and guiding principles, as stated in EPA's Strategic Plan.

Achieving all of EPA's statutory mandates and base program goals, however, would still not produce a sustainable environment. By taking a holistic and collaborative approach that considers the relationship of a community's environmental concerns to its economic and social conditions, EPA can help communities develop solutions that are both comprehensive and sustainable.

EPA's vision for CBEP is to support communities' efforts to use, protect, and restore natural resources—land, air, water, and biodiversity—in ways that help ensure long-term ecological, economic, social, and human health benefits for ourselves and future generations. To realize this vision, EPA will strive to fulfill the following goals:

EPA'S VISION FOR CBEP IS TO SUPPORT COMMUNITIES' EFFORTS TO USE, PROTECT, AND RESTORE NATURAL RESOURCES—LAND, AIR, WATER, AND BIODIVERSITY—IN WAYS THAT HELP ENSURE LONG-TERM ECOLOGICAL, ECONOMIC, SOCIAL, AND HUMAN HEALTH BENEFITS.

- ▶ Achieve environmental results consistent with EPA's mission and base program goals, as stated in EPA's authorizing statutes and Strategic Plan.
- ▶ Address environmental concerns and issues that are not addressed under traditional federal regulatory approaches, such as urban sprawl, urban and agricultural runoff, and loss of biological diversity.
- ▶ Help communities develop the tools and capacity necessary to be stewards of their human and natural resources.
- ▶ Coordinate and integrate EPA's programs and activities to increase the Agency's effectiveness in supporting sound community environmental decision making.

How Will EPA Implement Community-Based Environmental Protection?

EPA's role in CBEP will vary from place to place. In some places, EPA might lead the effort and work directly with communities as an active partner in designing and implementing effective environmental solutions. In most places, however, EPA's role will be far more limited, for example, providing information and tools to states, communities, and the public.

EPA will adopt a three-part strategy for implementing CBEP:

- ▶ **Reorient EPA Programs to Better Support CBEP.** EPA will work to integrate the CBEP approach into all of the Agency's programs by revising policies and rules, developing better lines of communication among programs, identifying and supporting CBEP research needs, and establishing education and training programs for EPA staff. In taking a CBEP approach, EPA will enhance its ability to meet its goals and objectives and improve the effectiveness of the Agency's nationwide environmental programs and regulations.

SUGGESTED PROCESS FOR TARGETING PLACES FOR EPA'S DIRECT INVOLVEMENT

KEY CATEGORIES/QUESTIONS	SUGGESTED CRITERIA
<p>Need for an EPA Role</p> <p>Will the area be significantly enhanced by direct EPA assistance, and does it need or require EPA Regional-level attention and resource focusing?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Resources are of national significance. Area requires a multimedia effort. Area has transboundary concerns. Community needs are currently unfulfilled.
<p>Level of Ecological/Human Health Risk</p> <p>Are the risks to humans and natural resources exceptional?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ecosystems are at particular risk or of particular importance. Area poses exceptional risk to human health. Impacts on minorities or low-income groups are disproportional.
<p>Likelihood of Success of EPA Efforts</p> <p>Will the Agency's involvement produce tangible short-term and long-term results?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community capacity and readiness. Availability of Agency resources.

- **Build External Capacity.** EPA cannot be directly involved in every community in the country, nor should it be. Rather than concentrating all of its resources in a small number of places, the Agency can reach thousands of communities by providing public access to existing environmental data, information, training, and grants. EPA will build the capacity of states, tribes, local agencies, community groups, and other stakeholders so that they will be able to address environmental problems more effectively.
- **Work Directly with Stakeholders in Places.** EPA, primarily through its Regional Offices, may provide hands-on, substantial assistance (e.g., placing Agency employees within a community, or providing funding, technical assistance, and/or data and information) to stakeholders within designated priority places. EPA Regional Offices will need to work with state and tribal governments to develop priority-setting processes and methods to identify and select new geographic areas that require significant Agency resources. Any process for targeting will consist of three key components: (1) assessing the need for EPA's role, (2) determining the level of ecological and human health risks, and (3) judging the likelihood of success.

How Will EPA Measure the Success of the CBEP Approach?

The Agency must be able to demonstrate the progress it makes toward realizing its CBEP goals. EPA recognizes the difficulty in developing measures that are sufficiently flexible to reflect local and regional variations in objectives, but still reflect progress toward EPA's national CBEP goals. The Agency also recognizes that most CBEP activities require years before they can demonstrate

CATEGORIES FOR MEASURING CBEP PERFORMANCE

EPA'S CBEP GOALS	PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT CATEGORIES	PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT SUBCATEGORIES
<p>Goal 1</p> <p>Coordinate and integrate.</p>	<p>EPA Activity Measures</p> <p>These measures enable EPA to gauge progress in the acceptance and use of CBEP approaches within EPA.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Efforts to reorient EPA programs. • Efforts to build the capacity of others. • Efforts to participate directly in places.
<p>Goal 2</p> <p>Help communities.</p>	<p>Community Capacity Measures</p> <p>These measures track changes in a community's capacity to engage CBEP activities and demonstrate the effectiveness of EPA's efforts to build capacity in places where it is not directly involved.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community infrastructure. • Governance. • Knowledge of and disposition toward the environment.
<p>Goal 3</p> <p>Achieve environmental results consistent with EPA's base program goals.</p> <p>Goal 4</p> <p>Address environmental concerns and issues not addressed under traditional federal regulatory approaches.</p>	<p>Outcome Measures</p> <p>These measures track the environmental (including human health), economic, and social/cultural results of CBEP work in places. In addition to measures tracked under EPA's Strategic Plan, they emphasize ecological results and measures that focus on sustainability.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Single environmental medium and human health stressors and conditions. • Ecological stressors and conditions. • Economic stressors and conditions. • Social/cultural stressors and conditions.

actual environmental results. Therefore, performance measures must be capable of measuring *progress toward* EPA's CBEP goals as well as *achievement* of those goals.

Toward this end, the Agency should use the performance measurement categories outlined in the table above to track its progress in achieving those goals.

Through CBEP, EPA can help communities create a vision of environmental health and quality of life and pursue activities that will achieve that vision. The ultimate success of this approach will depend upon EPA and its stakeholders working collaboratively and forming partnerships to identify needs, develop solutions, and effect change. With the CBEP Framework as a guide, EPA can look forward to continuing its successes in protecting human health and providing healthy, sustainable ecosystems for generations to come.